WEIGHING PRESIDENTIAL ISSUES

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POLITICAL STRIFE

"We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."—Abraham Lincoln.

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Weighing the Presidential Issues*

WHILE these lines are being written, a presidential campaign is in progress that baffles political prophets. Five candidates are in the field, and a tour of fourteen states deepens the conviction that there never was a more unsettled condition of mind among the voters of the country than exists thirty days prior to the presidential election of 1912. There have been straw votes showing the drift here and there, and several state elections, but none of these seem to bear the impress of finality.

A survey of the situation after exhaustive research shows the United States today an unexampled instance of the benefits of peace and prosperity. There is work everywhere, and a demand for still more workers. Two words inseparably associated are Peace and Prosperity. Now the first proposition that confronts the voter is the relation of the political situation to the business and wholesome welfare of the country and to his own personal interests. History reveals to us that in no nation that ever existed have the benefits of prosperity been so widely distributed per capita—that is, more people actually and individually owning more property per capita—as in the United States of America. This is not computed as simple division of the wealth by population. Whether responsible for this condition or not, it has come about under a series of Republican administrations. The election of a Republican President has resulted invariably in an adjustment of the country's agricultural, industrial and business affairs that has been of immeasurable popular benefit.

If a business man prospers he is loth to change his administrative and executive officials. If he has men who are doing well and have been identified with the upbuilding of his business, profits are regarded as the product of the efficient service of his men, and he at once instinctively feels the peril of a change. Primarily we must consider as business men all those who are "making good" today. Every workingman with his pay envelope, every farmer with his check for grain or stock, every man on a salary; in fact, every individual in America is essentially a business man. Business enters into the building of churches, schools, institutions, cities and homes; this tremendous unity of effort being the abiding assurance of a united country, under the smile of peace, in an era

*Written in response to many inquiries from readers as to the editorial opinion on the pending campaign.

of prosperity that has never before been approached in the history of a nation.

The opening of the Panama Canal, a successful national business undertaking carried out during these successive administrations in which millions of the public money have been diverted to the development of real commerce instead of spent on wars of aggression, has unfurled a new vista of national development. The opening of the Orient to American trade was significant, but still more important is our trade development in South America, in the Pacific, in the world over—the development that is certain to follow that great opening which means so much directly and personally to every man in the United States earning a dollar and hoping to earn more.

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THE past four years have found in the presidential chair a man presented as one thoroughly fitted and trained for the executive work of a nation. In four years we find the prophecy fulfilled in constructive administrative work, and in the regulative and restrictive measures that have held in check the avaricious and greedy. Progressive is scarcely a strong enough word to apply to the administration that has accomplished so much in the past four years. Progressive is as Progressive does. The merit rests in things *done.*

The work so well begun eleven years ago has been carried into concrete rather than abstract achievement, and it is certainly not progressive to go back even *one* year on the road of progress, much less *four.* The danger is today that, acting under an illusion, some leaders who earnestly believed themselves the Progressives of seven years ago are in fact the *reactionaries of today.* Some self-styled Progressives are protesting against the immutable and inevitable laws of progress which mean first and foremost the untrammeled freedom of the inherent right of individual initiative—the basis of the liberty for which our forefathers fought in establishing free and representative government. In these days restriction and regulation can be accomplished without rancor, hate, or passion. The world today has outgrown hatred, especially the United States. The greatest exponent of international world peace and the most influential peace advocate of any country has been William Howard Taft. One eminent European statesman pronounced his peace propaganda as the greatest stroke of statesmanship since the dawn of Christianity. We

must think of the war-waste of money—the thousands of lives that have been saved by cool-headed and far-sighted restraint in refusing to plunge the country while in the very bud of prosperity into the vortex of war. It would seem reactionary to replace him with one of militant ambitions.

In the beauty and glory of October days the voter will do a little thinking for himself. The month-old newspaper reads like a nightmare. A political platform with a prescription for all the woes of mankind seems almost ludicrous when you look about for the "invisible patient." The age of fake medicines has passed, and the people are now discriminating, able to judge clearly between political and medicinal nostrums. The men who are building up towns and cities, creating pay-rolls, establishing institutions, developing commerce, helping on the young men to help themselves in their individual work, are not carried away by paroxysms of passion when they see about them a condition that belies the "motion" pictures of political aspirants. Irresistibly the current is sweeping along that will wash out and clear away the driftwood that impedes world progress, not forgetting that a few reservoirs and dams are necessary to conserve the force of the stream, although they may appear at times to be obstructions to the ardent and impatient.

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THE Republican party is a party with a glorious past. It may have its blots, nevertheless present-day prosperity came under its activities and its adjustment to the needs and necessities of the times. As John Hay so eloquently said on the fiftieth anniversary of the party in Michigan:

"For fifty years the Republican party has believed in the country and labored for it in hope and joy; it has reverenced the flag and followed it; has carried it under strange skies and planted it on far-receding horizons. It has seen the nation grow greater every year and more respected; by just dealing, by intelligent labor, by a genius for enterprise, it has seen the country extend its intercourse and its influence to regions unknown to our fathers. Yet it has never abated one jot or title of the ancient law imposed on us by our God-fearing ancestors. We have fought a good fight, but also we have kept the faith. The Constitution of our fathers has been the light to our feet; our path is, and will ever remain that of *ordered progress, of liberty under the law.* The country has vastly increased, but the great-brained statesmen who preceded us provided for infinite growth. The discoveries

of science have made miraculous additions to our knowledge. But we are not daunted by progress; we are not afraid of the light. The fabric our fathers builded on such sure foundations will stand all shocks of fate or fortune."

The party in its progressiveness has never believed in tipping over the milk and crying about it, but in taking the pail and going after more, stimulating optimism and hope, and deprecating obstructive bitterness. Real progress seldom thrives in slime and muck. The muck pastures are being drained and the sour soil sweetened. The atmosphere on the political horizon is clearing, and while old party lines have been broken, the results in Maine show how quickly they can be re-established.

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MANY first voters insist upon having opened to them the same doors of opportunity and initiative which served their fathers. Other voters will remember the smokeless chimneys, the soup-houses, the gaunt faces and the wild and pathetic cry for work everywhere in '93, when a change was made in the fiscal and administrative policy of the nation. There is a time and tide in the affairs of every voter when he soberly realizes the responsibility that rests upon him in protecting not only his own family and individual interest, but the sources from which he must seek and earn a livelihood. His own horizon of opportunity is considered.

The American people are not superficial. They realize today the absolute necessity of a protective tariff in order to maintain the American standard of living. This is the specific tariff policy of the Republican party at this time, and it is inconceivable that a party so clearly and definitely representing a tariff policy that holds in check the ravages of cheap labor, foreign goods, by a maximum and minimum tariff that automatically builds up American trade on the business principle of give and take will not be supported.

The battle alignment is clearly defined between the great political parties on the tariff question. Professor Woodrow Wilson has long advocated policies and ideas clearly defined in his books and public addresses, most emphatically opposing a protective tariff. He has pronounced "protective tariff nothing more than bounty," and has stated that "it hinders commerce immensely." On a direct question he insisted that he was in favor of advocating a repeal of *all protective tariff laws* and establishing a tariff for revenue merely.

YES, we hear about the high cost of living, which we realize is a world-wide problem and the penalty of progress. The cities increase, the farms decrease in proportion, the population increases, and production from farm and ranch decreases as the city grows from the farm. Gold production increases and the value of gold decreases. The farmer increases his land value tenfold, and products from $100 land cost more than from $10 land. It is an individual problem and can only be solved by the adjustment of expenditures for necessities. A comparison with what our fathers and mothers expended under the same conditions tells the story. The fear of sneers of friends and neighbors and even strangers adds to the cost of living. The methods of merchandising, the higher and better standard of living today must be adjusted. The American standard of living is a direct result of protective tariff and this same tariff is absolutely essential to preserve that standard of living which the people have enjoyed under Republican administrations. Is it progressive to take away these increased luxuries and go back to the days of a cheaper dollar and scarcity of work and wages?

The situation is altogether perplexing; it is without analogy or precedent, and after attending the national conventions and political meetings in fourteen states, the situation still defies a prediction of assurance. The average voter is weighing presidential issues as distinctive from personal or local issues—a differentiation never known before. He is waiting until all the evidence is heard to cast his ballot with that discrimination which has already shown itself where congressmen of one party have been elected, while at the same time a majority of votes were cast for candidates of another party on the state ticket.

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THE drift of opinion following the national convention—that the break in Republican ranks assured the victory of Doctor Wilson—wanes as election day approaches. The lively interest in the revolt of the third-term candidate shows that it is drawing from Wilson, also from the Socialist and Prohibitionist candidates, to an extent greater than from Taft, while many Democrats who revere the Constitution have quietly determined to vote for Taft and take no chances.

The results in Michigan show that the third-term party polled a lighter vote than the Prohibition party. The November result

will be a distinct verdict on clearly defined national issues. The insistent call for progress and for a perpetuation of peace and prosperity is sounding out clearly in the din and clash of the political skirmish lines. The great reserve force of voters, inspired by a quiet spirit of patriotism and a realization of what Republican principles and administrations mean to the material and moral welfare of the country and themselves, are going to vote from conviction rather than emotion. The young men have taken hold of the political oars with the determination that political bosses and barons must go. A boss is a boss, however labeled, and President Taft has proven himself independent of the Arch-Boss of the times.

"The sons of Troy on high designs the wakeful hours employ," sings Homer in his "Iliad." "The scattered shafts and broken bows of ambitions glitter in the dust and will lie here and there dishonored relics of Diana's war." The awakened conscience of the people demands fair-minded justice between man and man, and voters resent being made a party to personal feuds and hypercritical judgments. The real, progressive spirit of the times, fearless of foes who have thrived on political bigotry and puerile warfare, is emphasized in the new alignment and organization of the Republican party. Leaders are demanded who have a sense of right and justice to *every man*, poor or rich, high or low, who is doing his best toward opening wider the doors of opportunity. The United States has always been known as a nation of Opportunity, and the inherent right of an American citizen is to insist on an administration of affairs that looks to the welfare of American interests, American homes and American ideals. The wholesale importation of Old World ideas, of Swiss referendum and initiative, of French mob-recall of judiciary injected into so-called Progressive platforms would be reactionary and repress American initiative to the level of Old World countries that are still groping for New World prosperity.

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IN the personnel of the candidates, the country is indeed fortunate, for every one of the five represents the highest type of manhood. None can gainsay the intrepid, brilliant and popular qualities of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt; Doctor Wilson's public and private life is without a blemish; and the same may be said of Doctor Chapin and Eugene V. Debs. The genial, conscientious character of President Taft has stood the test of years of

merciless scrutiny. But the presidential election is not a decision of personal preference—it is a decision upon fundamental principles upon which the administration of the government is to be based, and among these principles are three things that it seems must result in the election of William Howard Taft; first, the record he has made and the results he has shown; second, because he represents more directly and more concretely than any other candidate the tariff policy of the nation with which prosperity has always been associated. There have been no smokeless chimneys—no panics during Taft's administration. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, on the threshold of a changing in the commercial currents of the high seas, a broad and ardent spirit of international world peace has, under the influence of William Howard Taft, received a recognition and exerts an influence which this country little realizes; and the continuance of this world-wide, firmly-established spirit of Peace means much to every man, woman and child. It means holding in check those passions that invoke the terrors of war and usher in bloodshed and devastation. The strong, impregnable position of William Howard Taft on the peace question has saved millions of dollars to his country, to say nothing of protecting American households from the loss of father, brother, lover and friend through sad and gruesome war.

When I saw President Taft during the campaign, he seemed personally indifferent to the results, looking forward to election day with the confidence of one who has done his work conscientiously and well. All the bitter shafts of political warfare and rancor fell harmless at his feet. He looked earnestly into the embers on the hearth and quietly said, "The one great dream of my life is to have my country lead in the permanent establishment of a world peace, an appropriate policy with which to commemorate the opening of the Panama Canal, a grateful appreciation of the unexampled era of prosperity with which this country has been blessed by a kind Providence and an intelligent, high-minded and energetic citizenship."

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ALTHOUGH many strange things may happen in a few days, even this early I cannot conceive that the American people are going to make a mistake. There will be more earnest and conscientious individual thoughtfulness in casting the presidential ballots in 1912 than ever has been known before, and in the con-

fines of the voting booth with the picture of his own hearthstone in mind, the American voter will not thoughtlessly sign away his birthright as an American to a protective tariff income. He will realize that the nation's prosperity and free representative government, which means the delegating of power to a fellow-citizen in whose ability and integrity he has faith and confidence—made fast to sound constitutional moorings—mean more than the uncertainty involved in a change. He will ask himself the question—a change to what?

Hopeful, without indulging in prophecy, the writer looks forward with confidence to a verdict in November that will not imperil, but rather enhance the progress of the nation, by holding fast, as McKinley said, "to that which we *know* is good"—to those principles and the progress of the Republican party which have never failed to yield substantial dividends of confidence, peace and prosperity—instead of broken promises which too often constitutes the currency of visionaries—to every citizen in his capacity as a stockholder of the greatest business establishment the world has ever known. The scales are duly balanced, and the result lies "on the knees of the gods."

Ira Mitchell Chappler

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